



IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE  
BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

In re

Patent Application of

Lawrence A. Jenkins

Serial No. 09/879,235

Filed: June 11, 2001

Group Art Unit: 3621

Examiner: Pierre E. Elisca

“INTERACTIVE SELF-STORAGE RENTAL  
SYSTEM AND METHOD”

I, Karen Kline, hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the US Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on the date of my signature.

*Karen Kline*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

*1/12/05*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Signature

**APPEAL BRIEF**

Mail Stop APPEAL BRIEF PATENTS  
Commissioner for Patents  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

The Applicant has appealed from the decision dated January 7, 2005 of the Examiner rejecting claims 1, 4-10, and 39-48. A check for \$250 in payment of the fee for this Appeal Brief is submitted herewith.

The Applicant's attorney has filed a Notice of Appeal herewith.

01/19/2005 SSITHIB1 00000055 09879235

01 FC:2402

250.00 OP

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST .....	3
II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES.....	3
III. STATUS OF CLAIMS .....	3
IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS .....	3
V. SUMMARY OF CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER .....	3
A. General Context of Embodiments of the Applicant's Invention .....	3
B. Independent Claim 1 .....	4
VI. GROUNDS OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL.....	5
VII. ARGUMENT .....	5
A. The Law Governing Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) .....	5
B. The References.....	6
1. U.S. Patent No. 5,946,660 ("McCarty") .....	6
2. U.S. Patent No. 6,347,302 ("Joao") .....	7
3. U.S. Patent No. 5,724,261 ("Denny").....	7
C. Claims 1, 7-10, and 39-48 Are Not Unpatentable Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over McCarty and Joao in view of Denny .....	8
1. Independent Claim 1 .....	8
2. Claim 7 .....	13
3. Claim 8 .....	13
4. Claim 9 .....	14
5. Claim 10 .....	15
6. Claim 39 .....	15
7. Claim 40 .....	16
8. Claim 41 .....	17
9. Claim 42 .....	17
10. Claim 43 .....	18
11. Claim 44 .....	19
12. Claim 45 .....	20
13. Claim 46 .....	20
14. Claim 47 .....	21
15. Claim 48 .....	21
D. Claims 4, 5, and 6 Are Not Unpatentable Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over McCarty, Joao, and Denny, and Further in view of "Official Notice" .....	22
1. Claim 4 .....	22
2. Claim 5 .....	23
3. Claim 6 .....	25
VIII. CONCLUSION .....	25
IX. CLAIMS APPENDIX .....	26

I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

The real party in interest is Trachte Building Systems, Inc., 314 Wilburn Road, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin 53590.

II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

There are no related appeals or interferences.

III. STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1, 4-10, and 39-48 are pending. Claims 1, 4-10, and 39-48 stand rejected and are being appealed. Claims 2, 3, and 11-38 have been canceled.

IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

On December 15, 2004, the Applicant submitted a Request for Continued Examination (RCE) and Response including amendments to claims 1, 7-9, 39-44, and 47 to place the application in a better condition for consideration on appeal, and introducing new claim 48. The Examiner entered the amended and new claims in the Office action of January 7, 2005.

V. SUMMARY OF CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER

A. General Context of Embodiments of the Applicant's Invention

The Applicant developed a method and system for renting a self-storage unit that, though based on technological underpinnings, shields users from having to directly interact with technology. For example, as described in the specification, “[t]he system eliminates the need for a customer to read a computer menu, read instructions, or push correct buttons, thus allowing easy use of the rental system by a non-technically trained customer who is relatively unskilled in computer operation.” (Para. 40; emphasis added.) Moreover, “[b]y automatically establishing interactive communication with a remote system manager, a customer need only to respond to questions and directions received [from] the remote manager that do not require special knowledge or skills on the part of the customer.” (Id.; emphasis added.)

It can be appreciated that embodiments of the Applicant's invention benefit a large segment of the consumer population that (1) is uncomfortable or unfamiliar with computers and related devices, (2) lacks the mental or physical dexterity to "read a computer menu, read instructions, ... push correct buttons," or handle other computer operations, or (3) is simply not inclined to utilize modern technology. For instance, elderly or disabled persons can benefit from the Applicant's method, which does not require that the customer interface with technology, such as magnetic card readers, or that the customer otherwise proactively initiate steps in the rental process. No knowledge of, or skills in, computer-based transactions are required on the part of the customer. Instead, a remote manager—a human being who can view the customer service area and speak with a customer during a transaction—can instruct the customer which actions to take.

In short, the Applicant's approach is a marked departure from the approaches taken by the references of record, in which customers must interface with or operate modern technologies in order to consummate a transaction.

#### B. Independent Claim 1

Independent claim 1 is directed to a method for renting a customer a self-storage unit located at a self-storage facility. The method is adapted to facilitate transactions with customers including customers who lack appreciable skills in computer operation, and to enable customers to respond to questions and instructions not requiring specialized knowledge or skills on the part of the customers. (See Specification at para. 40 or page 11, lines 26-31.)

The method comprises the steps of providing a customer service area including a customer service counter (para. 27 or page 6, lines 29 & 30; FIG. 4, customer service area 22, customer service countertop 66); establishing voice communication between the remote manager and a customer entering the customer service area using a communication link so that the customer and the remote manager can orally communicate using the communication link (para. 28 or page 7, lines 6-8; FIG. 4, speakerphone 52); providing an access controller by which the remote manager can remotely provide the customer access to the recommended self-storage unit so the customer can inspect the recommended self-storage unit (para. 35 or page 9, lines 28-31); and providing the customer a hardcopy rental agreement form having at least a portion to be filled out manually with inserted data by the customer, as directed by the remote manager (para. 36 or page 10, lines 6-10).

The customer service counter has a rental agreement viewing area which is viewed by at least one camera positioned in the customer service area. (Para. 28 or page 7, lines 8-13; FIG. 4, rectangular area 68, cameras 56b, 56c.) The customer service counter is configured to minimize glare in images captured by the at least one camera. (Para. 29 or page 7, lines 23-26.) At least one image captured by the at least one camera is viewable by a remote manager, who is a person remote from the customer service counter. (Para. 28 or page 7, lines 10-13.) The customer service area is independent of a computer-generated customer menu interface and manipulable customer input buttons. (Para. 40 or page 11, lines 26 & 27.)

The customer can orally communicate to the remote manager through the communication link an indication of the storage needs of the customer, and the remote manager can orally communicate to the customer through the communication link a recommended self-storage unit. (Para. 34 or page 9, lines 18-22.)

At least some of the inserted data is verifiable by the remote manager with the output of the at least one camera. At least one image captured by the at least one camera allows the remote manager to view an image of the hardcopy rental agreement placed on the rental agreement viewing area. (Para. 28 or page 7, lines 8-13; FIG. 4, rectangular area 68, cameras 56b, 56c.)

## VI. GROUNDS OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL

1. Whether claims 1, 7-10, and 39-48 are unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over McCarty et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,946,660, “McCarty”) and Joao (U.S. Patent No. 6,347,302, “Joao”) in view of Denny et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,724,261, “Denny”).

2. Whether claims 4, 5, and 6 are unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over McCarty, Joao, and Denny, and further in view of “Official notice.”

## VII. ARGUMENT

### A. The Law Governing Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

The test for obviousness is what the combined teachings of the prior art would have suggested to one of ordinary skill in the art. In re Keller, 642 F.2d 413, 425, 208 U.S.P.Q. 871, 881 (CCPA 1981). In proceedings before the Patent and Trademark Office, the Examiner bears the burden of presenting a *prima facie* case of obviousness based upon the prior art. In re Fritch, 972 F.2d 1260, 1265, 23 U.S.P.Q.2d 1780, 1783 (Fed. Cir. 1992); In re Fine, 837 F.2d 1071, 1074, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596, 1598 (Fed. Cir. 1988).

To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. In re Vaeck, 947 F.2d 488, 493, 20 U.S.P.Q. 2d 1438, 1442 (Fed. Cir. 1991). Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Id. Finally, the prior art reference (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all of the claim limitations. In re Royka, 490 F.2d 981, 985, 180 U.S.P.Q. 580, 583 (CCPA 1974); MPEP §§ 706.02(j), 2143.03.

In establishing a *prima facie* case of obviousness, it is incumbent upon the Examiner to provide a reason why one of ordinary skill in the art would have been led to modify a prior art reference or to combine reference teachings to arrive at the claimed invention. Ex parte Clapp, 227 U.S.P.Q. 972, 973 (Bd. Pat. App. & Int. 1985). To this end, the requisite motivation must stem from some teaching, suggestion, or inference in the prior art as a whole or from the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art and not from Appellant's disclosure. Uniroyal, Inc. v. Rudkin-Wiley Corp., 837 F.2d 1044, 1051, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1434, 1439 (Fed. Cir.), cert. denied, 488 U.S. 825 (1988); In re Vaeck, 947 F.2d at 493, 20 U.S.P.Q.2d at 1442; MPEP § 2143. The Examiner can only establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness by pointing out some objective teaching in the prior art references themselves that would lead one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the relevant teachings and the references. In re Fine, 837 F.2d at 1074, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d at 1598-99; In re Jones, 958 F.2d 347, 351, 21 U.S.P.Q.2d 1941, 1943-44 (Fed. Cir. 1992); MPEP § 2143.01.

A proposed modification to a prior art reference cannot render the prior art invention unsatisfactory for its intended purpose or change the principle of operation of the prior art invention. In re Gordon, 733 F.2d 900, 221 U.S.P.Q. 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1984); In re Ratti, 270 F.2d 810, 123 U.S.P.Q. 349 (CCPA 1959); MPEP § 2143.01. If the proposed modification destroys the intended purpose or principle of operation of the prior art reference, then there is no suggestion or motivation to make the proposed modification, and the teachings of the references are not sufficient to render the claims obvious. Id.

## B. The References

### 1. U.S. Patent No. 5,946,660 ("McCarty")

McCarty discloses a fully-automated interactive kiosk 22 used to rent storage space "without the need for an attendant" (see Abstract; col. 1, lines 15-16; col. 2, lines 22-24; col.

3, line 43) and in communication with a computerized command center 12 (col. 2, lines 21-35). The McCarty system requires the customer to interface with various computer-based devices, including a screen display 28 (which may be a touch screen display), an electronic input template and electronic pen, a keypad 44, a credit card reader 38, and a check reader 40. (Col. 5, lines 3-56.) A processor 26 displays information regarding available storage units. The user is then prompted by the processor 26 to select a storage unit, input personal information, and select from payment methods. A user provides a signature, with an electronic pen assembly 30, for a computer-generated electronic custom rental agreement. A hardcopy of the fully executed rental agreement is then printed. (Col. 7, line 66 to col. 8, line 34.) The user is given a code or key to enter the storage facility. (Col. 8, lines 41-45.) A camera 32 captures surveillance images and/or electronically stores images of various important documents. (Col. 6, lines 4-11.) If the customer needs further assistance when interfacing with the computer-based devices, the customer can call a 24-hour customer service line to speak with a customer service representative (col. 6, lines 56-61), but is still left with the task of manipulating the computer-based devices.

2. U.S. Patent No. 6,347,302 (“Joao”)

Joao discloses a fully-automated apparatus for providing an insurance contract to a person renting or leasing property. Information regarding the renter and the rental property is input into a computer system via user input device(s) 4, such as a keyboard, scanner, and/or user pointing device. (Fig. 1; col. 5, lines 49-58.) The computer (CPU 1) uses this information as well as actuarial data to determine whether an insurance policy should be issued and the level of premium. (Abstract; Fig. 2A; claim 1.)

3. U.S. Patent No. 5,724,261 (“Denny”)

Denny discloses a property inspection system that, via a computerized controller, systematically prompts an employee of a property management company to inspect a rented property and input condition information into a data entry device 10. The employee is physically on the premises when inspecting the property. In one embodiment, the employee uses a hand held bar code reader to scan certain items within the rental property. The hand held device, which includes data entry means 16 (e.g., a keypad), a microprocessor, and a display screen 20, then prompts the inspector to input condition information. (Abstract; col. 2, lines 47-66; col. 7, line 36 to col. 8, line 9.)

C. Claims 1, 7-10, and 39-48 Are Not Unpatentable Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over McCarty and Joao in view of Denny

1. Independent Claim 1

The Applicant submits that claim 1 is not unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over McCarty and Joao in view of Denny for at least the following reasons. First, McCarty, Joao, and Denny fail to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1. Second, these references teach away from the claimed invention. Third, there is no motivation to modify McCarty as proposed by the Examiner.

a. The references fail to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1

(i) McCarty

McCarty does not teach or suggest at least the following underscored limitations of claim 1:

providing a customer service area including a customer service counter, the customer service counter having a rental agreement viewing area which is viewed by at least one camera positioned in the customer service area, the customer service counter being configured to minimize glare in images captured by the at least one camera, at least one image captured by the at least one camera being viewable by a remote manager, the remote manager being a person who is remote from the customer service counter, the customer service area being independent of a computer-generated customer menu interface and manipulable customer input buttons;

...

providing an access controller by which the remote manager can remotely provide the customer access to the recommended self-storage unit so the customer can inspect the recommended self-storage unit; and

providing the customer a hardcopy rental agreement form having at least a portion to be filled out manually with inserted data by the customer, as directed by the remote manager,

at least some of the inserted data being verifiable by the remote manager with the output of the at least one camera, at least one image captured by the at least one camera allowing the remote manager to view an image of the hardcopy rental agreement placed on the rental agreement viewing area.

Specifically, unlike the claimed invention, McCarty does not disclose “at least one image captured by the at least one camera being viewable by a remote manager, the remote



manager being a person who is remote from the customer service counter.” To the contrary, in McCarty, surveillance images are taken (col. 6, lines 4-11), but there is no teaching or suggestion that a remote manager who “is a person” views the images during the transaction, or that the images are sufficiently clear to be usable if a remote manager were present. In fact, there may be no need for any person to view such images unless an exceptional event, such as a crime, occurs. McCarty describes the availability of a customer service representative by phone (col. 6, lines 56-61), but is devoid of any teaching or suggestion that the representative can do anything more than listen to and audibly answer a customer’s questions. Moreover, McCarty is devoid of any teaching or suggestion that the computerized command center 12 (col. 2, lines 21-35) includes a human remote manager who can view images at the storage facility.

Similarly, McCarty does not disclose “the customer service area being independent of a computer-generated customer menu interface and manipulable customer input buttons.” In direct contrast to the claimed invention, the McCarty system is based on computer-generated customer menu interfaces and manipulable customer input buttons and related devices, including the screen display 28, electronic input template and electronic pen, keypad 44, credit card reader 38, and check reader 40 (col. 5, lines 3-56).

Further, McCarty does not disclose “providing an access controller by which the remote manager can remotely provide the customer access to the recommended self-storage unit so the customer can inspect the recommended self-storage unit.” In McCarty, the user is merely given a code or key to enter the storage facility. (Col. 8, lines 41-45.) There is no human remote manager, and no access controller by which a person can remotely provide a customer with access to a self-storage unit.

The McCarty system also does not disclose “providing the customer a hardcopy rental agreement form having at least a portion to be filled out manually with inserted data by the customer, as directed by the remote manager.” To the contrary, a rental agreement in McCarty is printed after it is fully executed based on customer inputs to the electronic form and on the customer’s electronically acquired signature (col. 7, line 66 to col. 8, line 34). As such, the McCarty printout is a complete agreement, with no portions to be filled out manually as directed by a human remote manager.

Additionally, McCarty does not disclose “at least some of the inserted data being verifiable by the remote manager with the output of the at least one camera, at least one image captured by the at least one camera allowing the remote manager to view an image of the hardcopy rental agreement placed on the rental agreement viewing area.” As noted

above, there is no human remote manager in McCarty who views images. More fundamentally, because generation and printing of a fully-executed contract is controlled by a computer, there would be no need in McCarty for a subsequent visual verification of the printed data.

Further, McCarty does not disclose “the customer service counter being configured to minimize glare in images captured by the at least one camera.” In particular, there is no teaching or suggestion whatsoever that the kiosk 22 or its surroundings are configured as recited by the Applicant in order to ensure that images are sufficiently clear to be usable.

(ii) Joao and Denny

Joao and Denny fail to remedy the deficiencies of McCarty with respect to claim 1. In particular, Joao and Denny fail to teach or suggest, among other things:

... the customer service counter being configured to minimize glare in images captured by the at least one camera, at least one image captured by the at least one camera being viewable by a remote manager, the remote manager being a person who is remote from the customer service counter, the customer service area being independent of a computer-generated customer menu interface and manipulable customer input buttons;

providing an access controller by which the remote manager can remotely provide the customer access to the recommended self-storage unit so the customer can inspect the recommended self-storage unit; and

providing the customer a hardcopy rental agreement form having at least a portion to be filled out manually with inserted data by the customer, as directed by the remote manager,

at least some of the inserted data being verifiable by the remote manager with the output of the at least one camera, at least one image captured by the at least one camera allowing the remote manager to view an image of the hardcopy rental agreement placed on the rental agreement viewing area.

Joao discloses a fully-automated apparatus for providing an insurance contract to a person renting or leasing property. Information regarding the renter and the rental property is inputted into a computer system, which has a display device 5, via user input device(s) 4, such as a keyboard, scanner, and/or user pointing device. (Fig. 1; col. 5, lines 49-58.) The computer (CPU 1) uses this information as well as actuarial data to determine whether an insurance policy should be issued and the level of premium. (Abstract; Fig. 2A; claim 1.)

Thus, Joao fails to teach or suggest, among other things, a remote manager who is “a person,” as well as the other limitations of claim 1 set forth above.

Denny discloses a property inspection system that, via a computerized controller, systematically prompts an employee of a property management company to inspect a rented property and input condition information into a data entry device 10. The employee is physically on the premises when inspecting the property. In one embodiment, the employee uses a hand held bar code reader to scan certain items within the rental property. The hand held device, which includes data entry means 16 (e.g., a keypad), a microprocessor, and a display screen 20, then prompts the inspector to input condition information. (Abstract; col. 2, lines 47-66; col. 7, line 36 to col. 8, line 9.) Thus, Denny fails to teach or suggest, among other things, a remote manager who is “a person,” as well as the other limitations of claim 1 set forth above, including “providing an access controller by which the remote manager can remotely provide the customer access to the recommended self-storage unit.”

b. The references teach away from the claimed invention

In addition to failing to teach or suggest the claimed subject matter, the cited references teach away from the claimed invention.

McCarty discloses a system which depends on a user interfacing with various computer-based devices, including a screen display 28, an electronic input template and electronic pen, a keypad 44, a credit card reader 38, and a check reader 40. (Col. 5, lines 3-56.) Indeed, McCarty provides a system that is “fully automated so as to eliminate the need for an on-duty attendant.” (Col. 4, lines 22-24.) The claimed invention, by contrast, provides a setting for a transaction that is “independent of a computer-generated customer menu interface and manipulable customer input buttons.” As such, McCarty is fundamentally different than, and teaches away from, the claimed invention.

Similarly, Joao teaches away from the claimed invention. In particular, Joao is a fully-automated system that provides an insurance quote based upon certain parameters inputted into the device. The system requires user interaction with computer-based devices, including the display device, keyboard, scanner, and/or user pointing device. (Fig. 1; col. 5, lines 49-58.) The Applicant’s claimed invention, by contrast, provides a setting for a transaction that is “independent of a computer-generated customer menu interface and manipulable customer input buttons.”

Denny likewise teaches away from the claimed invention. In Denny, the employee performing the inspection is on the premises to be inspected, receiving no direction from a remote manager of any kind. Further, the employee in Denny must manipulate and follow prompts of the computerized data entry device 10, which includes the data entry means 16, microprocessor, and display screen 20. (Abstract; col. 2, lines 47-66; col. 7, line 36 to col. 8, line 9.) In marked contrast to Denny, the claimed invention provides a setting for a transaction that is “independent of a computer-generated customer menu interface and manipulable customer input buttons.”

c. There is no motivation to modify McCarty as proposed by the Examiner

Further, the Applicant submits that there is no motivation to modify McCarty as proposed by the Examiner. As noted above, it is well-established that if a proposed modification destroys the intended purpose or principle of operation of a prior art reference, then there is no suggestion or motivation to make the proposed modification, and the teachings of the references are not sufficient to render the claims obvious.

McCarty is based fundamentally on an approach in which a customer interacts with a computer in order to rent a storage unit. Indeed, the McCarty system is specifically designed to eliminate the need for an attendant in a rental transaction. As such, the architecture of McCarty is directly counter to that of the claimed invention, which, among other things, shields customers from having to directly interact with technology and relies upon a human remote manager to guide a customer through the rental process. To modify McCarty, as suggested by the Examiner, would destroy the intended purpose of McCarty and fundamentally change the principles of operation of McCarty. For example, in the modified McCarty system, (a) there would be a need for an attendant, hardware to allow the attendant to view images during the transaction, and an access controller for use by the attendant; (b) none of the computer-based customer devices of McCarty would be used by the customer during the rental process; and (c) there would be no need for hardware and software to generate a fully executed rental agreement. In other words, the Examiner’s proposed modification of McCarty jettisons substantially all the functionality and supporting structure disclosed by McCarty.

Accordingly, there is no motivation to modify McCarty, and McCarty cannot render the claimed invention obvious.

For at least the above reasons, independent claim 1 is not obvious over McCarty and Joao in view of Denny, and the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) should be withdrawn.

## 2. Claim 7

Claim 7 depends from claim 1 and further recites that “the remote manager identifies a self-storage unit which can accommodate the storage needs of the customer, and the remote manager recommends to the customer a self-storage unit within the self-storage facility that can accommodate the storage needs of the customer.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1 apply with equal weight to claim 7. For the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. For at least the above reasons, claim 7 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 7 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, and Denny, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest that “the remote manager identifies a self-storage unit which can accommodate the storage needs of the customer, and the remote manager recommends to the customer a self-storage unit within the self-storage facility that can accommodate the storage needs of the customer.” Joao and Denny are unrelated to self-storage units and do not otherwise disclose human remote managers who identify or recommend items. McCarty, though related to self-storage units, fails to teach or suggest a human remote manager who takes the actions recited in claim 7. To the contrary, it is the processor 26 of McCarty that displays available units, from which the user selects a desired unit without regard to a recommendation. (Col. 7, line 66 to col. 8, line 3.)

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 7 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 7 is allowable.

## 3. Claim 8

Claim 8 depends from claim 1 and further recites that “with the access controller, the remote manager can selectively remotely open an access gate to allow the customer access to and egress from the self-storage unit.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1 apply with equal weight to claim 8. For the

sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. For at least the above reasons, claim 8 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 8 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, and Denny, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest that “with the access controller, the remote manager can selectively remotely open an access gate to allow the customer access to and egress from the self-storage unit.” Joao and Denny are unrelated to self-storage units and do not otherwise disclose an access controller as recited. McCarty merely discloses that a user is given a code or key to enter the storage facility (col. 8, lines 41-45).

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 8 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 8 is allowable.

#### 4. Claim 9

Claim 9 depends from claim 8 and further recites that “an image of the customer is viewable by the remote manager with an on-site camera as the customer approaches the access gate.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 8 apply with equal weight to claim 9. For the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. For at least the above reasons, claim 9 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 9 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, and Denny, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest that “an image of the customer is viewable by the remote manager with an on-site camera as the customer approaches the access gate.” Joao and Denny are unrelated to self-storage units and do not otherwise disclose images viewable by a remote manager. McCarty, though related to self-storage units, fails to teach or suggest the recited feature of claim 9. To the contrary, in McCarty, surveillance images are taken (col. 6, lines 4-11), but there is no teaching or suggestion that a human remote manager views the images during or prior to a transaction. In fact, there may be no need for any person to view such images unless an exceptional event, such as a crime, occurs.

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 9 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 9 is allowable.

5. Claim 10

Claim 10 depends from claim 1 and further recites that “the hardcopy rental agreement form includes pre-printed self-storage unit identification information.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1 apply with equal weight to claim 10. For the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. For at least the above reasons, claim 10 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 10 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, and Denny, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest that “the hardcopy rental agreement form includes pre-printed self-storage unit identification information.” Joao and Denny are unrelated to self-storage units and do not otherwise disclose agreement forms. McCarty fails to teach or suggest a hardcopy rental agreement form as recited in claim 10. In McCarty, only a fully executed rental agreement is printed. (Col. 7, line 66 to col. 8, line 34.)

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 10 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 10 is allowable.

6. Claim 39

Claim 39 depends from claim 1 and further recites that “at least one image of the customer, generated by a camera positioned in at least one of the customer service area and the self-storage facility, is viewable by the remote manager to observe the customer.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1 apply with equal weight to claim 39. For the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. For at least the above reasons, claim 39 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 39 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, and Denny, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest that “at least one image of the customer, generated by a camera positioned in at least one of the customer service area and the self-storage facility, is viewable by the remote manager to observe the

customer.” Joao and Denny do not disclose images viewable by a remote manager. McCarty fails to teach or suggest the recited feature of claim 39. To the contrary, in McCarty, several surveillance images are taken (col. 6, lines 4-11), but there is no teaching or suggestion that a human remote manager views the images to observe a customer at the time of a transaction. In fact, there may be no need for any person to view such images unless an exceptional event, such as a crime, occurs.

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 39 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 39 is allowable.

#### 7. Claim 40

Claim 40 depends from claim 1 and further recites that “at least some of the self-storage units are viewable by the remote manager with a camera positioned in at least one of the customer service area and the self-storage facility.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1 apply with equal weight to claim 40. For the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. For at least the above reasons, claim 40 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 40 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, and Denny, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest that “at least some of the self-storage units are viewable by the remote manager with a camera positioned in at least one of the customer service area and the self-storage facility.” Joao and Denny are unrelated to self-storage units and do not otherwise disclose units viewable by a remote manager. McCarty fails to teach or suggest the recited feature of claim 40. In McCarty, surveillance images are taken (col. 6, lines 4-11), but there is no teaching or suggestion that a human remote manager views the images. In fact, there may be no need for any person to view such images unless an exceptional event, such as a crime, occurs.

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 40 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 40 is allowable.



8. Claim 41

Claim 41 depends from claim 1 and further recites that “the customer service area includes a merchandise cabinet having merchandise therein of possible interest to the customer, and further comprising the step of providing a cabinet access controller by which the remote manager can selectively remotely unlock the merchandise cabinet to allow the customer access to at least some of the merchandise.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1 apply with equal weight to claim 41. For the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. For at least the above reasons, claim 41 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 41 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, and Denny, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest that “the customer service area includes a merchandise cabinet having merchandise therein of possible interest to the customer, and further comprising the step of providing a cabinet access controller by which the remote manager can selectively remotely unlock the merchandise cabinet to allow the customer access to at least some of the merchandise.” Joao and Denny do not disclose cabinets or cabinet access controllers. McCarty also fails to teach or suggest a merchandise cabinet or a cabinet access controller as recited in claim 41. Instead, McCarty merely discloses that a user is given a code or key to enter the storage facility (col. 8, lines 41-45).

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 41 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 41 is allowable.

9. Claim 42

Claim 42 depends from claim 1 and further recites that “the customer service area includes a door, and further comprising the step of providing a door access controller by which the remote manager can selectively remotely lock the door to limit entry into the customer service area.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1 apply with equal weight to claim 42. For the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. For at least the above reasons, claim 42 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 42 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, and Denny, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest that “the customer service area includes a door, and further comprising the step of providing a door access controller by which the remote manager can selectively remotely lock the door to limit entry into the customer service area.” Joao and Denny are unrelated to self-storage units and do not disclose a door access controller or customer service area. McCarty, though related to self-storage units, fails to teach or suggest a customer service area with a door or a door access controller as recited in claim 42.

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 42 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 42 is allowable.

#### 10. Claim 43

Claim 43 depends from claim 1 and further recites that “the inserted data includes personal data and payment data, and wherein information corresponding to at least some of the inserted data and provided by the customer is verifiable, by the remote manager, with a camera positioned in the customer service area.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1 apply with equal weight to claim 43. For the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. For at least the above reasons, claim 43 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 43 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, and Denny, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest that “the inserted data includes personal data and payment data, and wherein information corresponding to at least some of the inserted data and provided by the customer is verifiable, by the remote manager, with a camera positioned in the customer service area.” Joao and Denny are unrelated to self-storage units and do not otherwise disclose manually inserted personal or payment data in a hardcopy agreement or verification of information by a human remote manager with a camera, as recited. McCarty, though related to self-storage units, fails to teach or suggest manually inserted personal data and payment data in a hardcopy agreement. In McCarty, only a fully executed agreement is provided as a hardcopy (col. 7, line 66 to col. 8, line 34). Additionally, McCarty fails to teach or suggest verification of manually inserted data by a human remote manager with a camera.

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 43 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 43 is allowable.

#### 11. Claim 44

Claim 44 depends from claim 1 and further recites that “the customer service counter includes a second viewing area for placement of at least personal identification information and payment information by the customer, the personal identification information including a customer photo-bearing identification card, the payment information including credit card or check information, wherein the second viewing area is viewed by at least one associated camera positioned in the customer service area and adapted to provide clearly defined images of the personal identification information and payment information, the second viewing area being distinct from the rental agreement viewing area, wherein the at least one associated camera allows the remote manager to view an image of the second viewing area from the remote location, wherein the inserted data in the hardcopy rental agreement includes personal data and payment data corresponding at least in part to the information in the second viewing area, and wherein the remote manager can verify correctness of the inserted data in the hardcopy rental agreement by viewing at least one image of the second viewing area captured by the at least one associated camera and comparing information in the at least one image with the corresponding data inserted by the customer in the hardcopy rental agreement.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1 apply with equal weight to claim 44. For the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. For at least the above reasons, claim 44 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 44 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, and Denny, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest any of the limitations added by claim 44. Joao and Denny are unrelated to self-storage units and do not disclose a viewing area, human remote manager, or comparison of images by a human remote manager. McCarty also fails to teach or suggest a viewing area, human remote manager, or comparison of images by a human remote manager, as recited in claim 44. McCarty merely discloses a camera 32 that can capture various images (col. 6, lines 4-11), but has no provision for comparison of images by a remote manager.

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 44 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 44 is allowable.

12. Claim 45

Claim 45 depends from claim 1 and further recites that “the customer service counter is painted a dark color to minimize glare.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1 apply with equal weight to claim 45. For the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. For at least the above reasons, claim 45 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 45 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, and Denny, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest that “the customer service counter is painted a dark color to minimize glare.” In particular, Joao and Denny are unrelated to self-storage units and do not otherwise disclose a customer service counter as recited. McCarty fails to teach or suggest a customer service counter painted as recited. Indeed, McCarty is devoid of any teaching or suggestion that the kiosk 22 is painted or otherwise configured to minimize glare.

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 45 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 45 is allowable.

13. Claim 46

Claim 46 depends from claim 1 and further recites that “the customer service counter is illuminated with milky white lights to minimize glare.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1 apply with equal weight to claim 46. For the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. For at least the above reasons, claim 46 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 46 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, and Denny, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest that “the customer service counter is illuminated with milky white lights to minimize glare.” Joao and Denny are unrelated to self-storage units and do not otherwise disclose a customer service counter as

recited. McCarty fails to teach or suggest a customer service counter illuminated as recited. Specifically, McCarty is devoid of any teaching or suggestion that the kiosk 22 or surrounding area is illuminated or otherwise configured to minimize glare.

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 46 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 46 is allowable.

#### 14. Claim 47

Claim 47 depends from claim 1 and further recites “the step of providing a rental agreement drop box for depositing completed hardcopy rental agreement forms, wherein the customer can insert a completed hardcopy rental agreement form in the drop box.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1 apply with equal weight to claim 47. For the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. For at least the above reasons, claim 47 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 47 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, and Denny, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest “the step of providing a rental agreement drop box for depositing completed hardcopy rental agreement forms, wherein the customer can insert a completed hardcopy rental agreement form in the drop box.” Joao and Denny are unrelated to self-storage units and do not otherwise disclose hardcopy rental agreement forms or a related drop box. McCarty fails to teach or suggest a rental agreement drop box. Indeed, McCarty actually teaches away from such a feature because the McCarty architecture generates electronically a fully executed agreement, merely printing a hardcopy for the customer’s records.

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 47 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 47 is allowable.

#### 15. Claim 48

Claim 48 depends from claim 44 and further recites that “the at least one associated camera of the second viewing area includes a selected lens and neutral light filter.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 44 apply with equal weight to claim 48. For

the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. For at least the above reasons, claim 48 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 48 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, and Denny, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest that “the at least one associated camera of the second viewing area includes a selected lens and neutral light filter.” In particular, Joao and Denny are unrelated to self-storage units and do not otherwise disclose the recited camera, lens, or filter. McCarty, though related to self-storage units, also fails to teach or suggest a camera with a lens and filter as recited. McCarty merely discloses a camera 32 that can capture various images (col. 6, lines 4-11), and fails to disclose or suggest a “selected lens and neutral light filter.”

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 48 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 48 is allowable.

D. Claims 4, 5, and 6 Are Not Unpatentable Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over McCarty, Joao, and Denny, and Further in view of “Official Notice”

1. Claim 4

Claim 4 depends from claim 1 and further recites that “the step of establishing voice communication between the remote manager and the customer includes the step of automatically telephoning the remote manager when the customer activates a customer service area door contact by entering the customer service area through a door.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1 apply with equal weight to claim 4. For the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. In addition, even if accepted as valid (which the Applicant does not accept), the Official notice taken by the Examiner (see Office action of January 7, 2005, page 7) would not remedy the above-noted deficiencies of McCarty, Joao, and Denny. For at least the above reasons, claim 4 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 4 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, Denny, and the Examiner’s Official notice, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest that “the step of establishing voice communication between the remote manager and the customer includes the step of automatically telephoning the remote manager when the customer activates a customer service area door contact by entering the customer service area

through a door.” Joao and Denny do not disclose automatic telephone arrangements. McCarty merely discloses that the telephone 42 is configured to provide a communication link to a customer service line (col. 6, lines 56-61), with no teaching or suggestion whatsoever that a remote manager is automatically telephoned based on an activated customer service area door contact. The Applicant submits that McCarty clearly teaches away from such a feature. In the McCarty architecture, which is designed to not depend on an attendant, the customer service line is only optionally used by a customer. As such, automatically telephoning a service representative based on an activated customer service area door contact, as recited in claim 4, would be inconsistent with the architecture and purpose of McCarty.

Additionally, the Applicant submits that the Examiner’s rationale in rejecting claim 4 is not sufficient to support a *prima facie* case of obviousness. The Examiner concluded that, because communication links are allegedly “notoriously well-known in the art,” the specific subject matter of claim 4 would have been obvious. However, this conclusion does not follow logically. The base reference, McCarty, teaches away from a communication link by which a remote manager is automatically telephoned based on an activated customer service area door contact. As such, the question for a proper obviousness analysis is not merely whether communication links are known, but also how they would be used in practice. Yet, the Examiner’s rejection is based solely on whether communication links are known. Further, any other merit that the rejection may have appears to be based on impermissible hindsight and cannot be sustained.

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 4 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 4 is allowable.

## 2. Claim 5

Claim 5 depends from claim 1 and further recites that “the step of establishing voice communication between the remote manager and the customer includes the step of automatically effecting voice communication between the remote manager and the customer in response to the customer entering the customer service area.”

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1 apply with equal weight to claim 5. For the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments.

Additionally, even if accepted as valid (which the Applicant does not accept), the Official notice taken by the Examiner (see Office action of January 7, 2005, page 7) would not remedy the above-noted deficiencies of McCarty, Joao, and Denny. For at least the above reasons, claim 5 is patentable.

Moreover, claim 5 is patentable separately from the other claims because McCarty, Joao, Denny, and the Examiner's Official notice, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest that "the step of establishing voice communication between the remote manager and the customer includes the step of automatically effecting voice communication between the remote manager and the customer in response to the customer entering the customer service area." Joao and Denny do not disclose automatic voice communication systems or methods. McCarty merely discloses that the telephone 42 is configured to provide a communication link to a customer service line (col. 6, lines 56-61), with no teaching or suggestion whatsoever that voice communication is automatically effected based on a customer entering a customer service area. The Applicant submits that McCarty clearly teaches away from such a feature. In the McCarty architecture, which is designed to not depend on an attendant, the customer service line is only optionally used by a customer. Thus, automatically effecting voice communication between a service representative and a customer based on the customer entering a customer service area, as recited in claim 5, would be inconsistent with the architecture and purpose of McCarty.

Further, the Applicant submits that the Examiner's rationale in rejecting claim 5 is not sufficient to support a *prima facie* case of obviousness. The Examiner concluded that, because communication links are allegedly "notoriously well-known in the art," the specific subject matter of claim 5 would have been obvious. However, this conclusion does not follow logically. The base reference, McCarty, teaches away from a communication link that is automatically effected based on a customer entering a customer service area. As such, the question for a proper obviousness analysis is not merely whether communication links are known, but also how they would be used in practice. Yet, the Examiner's rejection is based solely on whether communication links are known. Further, any other merit that the rejection may have appears to be based on impermissible hindsight and cannot be sustained.

For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 5 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 5 is allowable.



3. Claim 6

Claim 6 depends from claim 1 and further recites that "the step of establishing voice communication between the remote manager and the customer includes the step of automatically telephoning the remote manager when the customer picks up a telephone receiver disposed within the customer service area."

The arguments presented above regarding the failure of McCarty, Joao, and Denny to teach or suggest numerous limitations of claim 1 apply with equal weight to claim 6. For the sake of brevity, the Applicant incorporates by reference herein those arguments. Moreover, even if accepted as valid (which the Applicant does not accept), the Official notice taken by the Examiner (see Office action of January 7, 2005, page 7) would not remedy the above-noted deficiencies of McCarty, Joao, and Denny.

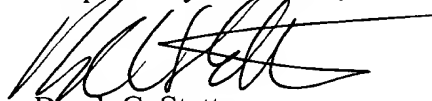
For at least the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness of claim 6 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 103. Accordingly, claim 6 is allowable.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, reversal of the rejection of claims 1, 4-10, and 39-48 and allowance of claims 1, 4-10, and 39-48 are respectfully requested.

Charge or credit Deposit Account No. 13-3080 with any shortage or overpayment of the fees associated with this communication.

Respectfully submitted,



Derek C. Stettner  
Reg. No. 37,945

Docket No. 088516-9001-00  
Michael Best & Friedrich LLP  
100 East Wisconsin Avenue  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202-4108  
(414) 271-6560

## IX. CLAIMS APPENDIX

1. A method for renting to a customer a self-storage unit located at a self-storage facility, said method adapted to facilitate transactions with customers including customers who lack appreciable skills in computer operation, said method adapted to enable customers to respond to questions and instructions not requiring specialized knowledge or skills on the part of the customers, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a customer service area including a customer service counter, the customer service counter having a rental agreement viewing area which is viewed by at least one camera positioned in the customer service area, the customer service counter being configured to minimize glare in images captured by the at least one camera, at least one image captured by the at least one camera being viewable by a remote manager, the remote manager being a person who is remote from the customer service counter, the customer service area being independent of a computer-generated customer menu interface and manipulable customer input buttons;

establishing voice communication between the remote manager and a customer entering the customer service area using a communication link so that the customer and the remote manager can orally communicate using the communication link,

wherein the customer can orally communicate to the remote manager through the communication link an indication of the storage needs of the customer, and

wherein the remote manager can orally communicate to the customer through the communication link a recommended self-storage unit;

providing an access controller by which the remote manager can remotely provide the customer access to the recommended self-storage unit so the customer can inspect the recommended self-storage unit; and

providing the customer a hardcopy rental agreement form having at least a portion to be filled out manually with inserted data by the customer, as directed by the remote manager,

at least some of the inserted data being verifiable by the remote manager with the output of the at least one camera, at least one image captured by the at least one camera allowing the remote manager to view an image of the hardcopy rental agreement placed on the rental agreement viewing area.

2.-3. (Canceled)

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of establishing voice communication between the remote manager and the customer includes the step of automatically telephoning the remote manager when the customer activates a customer service area door contact by entering the customer service area through a door.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of establishing voice communication between the remote manager and the customer includes the step of automatically effecting voice communication between the remote manager and the customer in response to the customer entering the customer service area.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of establishing voice communication between the remote manager and the customer includes the step of automatically telephoning the remote manager when the customer picks up a telephone receiver disposed within the customer service area.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the remote manager identifies a self-storage unit which can accommodate the storage needs of the customer, and the remote manager recommends to the customer a self-storage unit within the self-storage facility that can accommodate the storage needs of the customer.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein, with the access controller, the remote manager can selectively remotely open an access gate to allow the customer access to and egress from the self-storage unit.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein an image of the customer is viewable by the remote manager with an on-site camera as the customer approaches the access gate.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein the hardcopy rental agreement form includes pre-printed self-storage unit identification information.

11.-38. (Canceled)

39. The method of claim 1 wherein at least one image of the customer, generated by a camera positioned in at least one of the customer service area and the self-storage facility, is viewable by the remote manager to observe the customer.

40. The method of claim 1 wherein at least some of the self-storage units are viewable by the remote manager with a camera positioned in at least one of the customer service area and the self-storage facility.

41. The method of claim 1 wherein the customer service area includes a merchandise cabinet having merchandise therein of possible interest to the customer, and further comprising the step of providing a cabinet access controller by which the remote manager can selectively remotely unlock the merchandise cabinet to allow the customer access to at least some of the merchandise.

42. The method of claim 1 wherein the customer service area includes a door, and further comprising the step of providing a door access controller by which the remote manager can selectively remotely lock the door to limit entry into the customer service area.

43. The method of claim 1 wherein the inserted data includes personal data and payment data, and wherein information corresponding to at least some of the inserted data and provided by the customer is verifiable, by the remote manager, with a camera positioned in the customer service area.

44. The method of claim 1 wherein the customer service counter includes a second viewing area for placement of at least personal identification information and payment information by the customer, the personal identification information including a customer photo-bearing identification card, the payment information including credit card or check information, wherein the second viewing area is viewed by at least one associated camera positioned in the customer service area and adapted to provide clearly defined images of the personal identification information and payment information, the second viewing area being distinct from the rental agreement viewing area, wherein the at least one associated camera allows the remote manager to view an image of the second viewing area from the remote location, wherein the inserted data in the hardcopy rental agreement includes personal data and payment data corresponding at least in part to the information in the second viewing area,

and wherein the remote manager can verify correctness of the inserted data in the hardcopy rental agreement by viewing at least one image of the second viewing area captured by the at least one associated camera and comparing information in the at least one image with the corresponding data inserted by the customer in the hardcopy rental agreement.

45. The method of claim 1 wherein the customer service counter is painted a dark color to minimize glare.

46. The method of claim 1 wherein the customer service counter is illuminated with milky white lights to minimize glare.

47. The method of claim 1 and further comprising the step of providing a rental agreement drop box for depositing completed hardcopy rental agreement forms, wherein the customer can insert a completed hardcopy rental agreement form in the drop box.

48. The method of claim 44 wherein the at least one associated camera of the second viewing area includes a selected lens and neutral light filter.

X:\clientb\088516\9001\A1025062.4